ON RACE AND THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN QC

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In understanding language politics in Québec, it's important to remember that the project of "protecting French language and culture" is intimately connected to Québec's colonialism and racism. To begin with, French Québecois identity relies on an understanding of history that places them as the victims of English colonization, often going so far as to describe themselves as "indigenous" to Québec. The ways that history is taught in Québécois schools firmly places French settlers as allies of Indigenous people against the big bad colonizing English, bracketing that the dispute was actually a war between two competing colonizers. At the same time, French Québécois identity also relies on an idea of being "pure-laine" or "de souche" – that is to say, white, descended from the French, and (formerly) Catholic. It's a strange dichotomy, where to be a real Québécois and "pure-laine", you must simultaneously be of this land as well as non-native, i.e. white and from France.

In order to sustain their identity as victims of colonization, the French Québécois narrative does not allow for anyone else's oppression. This myth completely erases the actual colonial history of the territory, and the situation of Indigenous people here. Furthermore, anyone who is not "de souche" is understood as a threat to French language and culture, even if they are, for example, French-speaking migrants. In other words, virulent racism and anti-immigration sentiment are framed as a matter of linguistic protection. This discrimination is maintained through a constant assertion that French language and culture is under threat of extinction, despite the Numerous laws and bills which protect them. These laws uphold the social, economic, and political powers French Québécois yield, and their active involvement in the oppression of Indigenous people as well as people of colour.